supports terrorist activity. He also conveyed India's determination to fight the scourge of cross-border terrorism and protect the lives of the innocent citizens of India.

Indian demand to stop international aid to countries supporting terrorism

270. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has made demand that countries supporting terrorism should be barred from any aid and assistance from international aid agencies like World Bank and other institutions; and

(b) if so, the details of their response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

Seizure of Yasser Arafat's Office

271. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the office of the Palestine leader Yasser Arafat, had been put under siege by the Israeli troops during September, 2002;

(b) if so, whether Government have issued any statement condemning the Israeli action;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, whether Government's stand could be construed as a change in its policy towards the Palestine issue?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c) The following statement was issued by the Government of India on 23rd September, 2002 titled "India Expresses Concern At Developments In West Asia":

"India has noted with dismay that after six weeks of relative lull in violence the security situation has deteriorated sharply with two suicide bomb attacks, and incursions by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) against President Yasser Arafat's compound in Ramallah."

"We hope that all conerned parties would act decisively and in good faith to contain this renewed spiral of violance, with comes at a time when there are new initiatives by the international community, particularly the "Quartet", to re-start the negotiations towards peace and the establishment of an independent Palestine State."

(d) There is no change in the policy of the Government on the Palestine issue.

Designating India as Country of Particular Concern

272. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that for the first time India has been put on religious watchlist by the US administration and designated as Country of Particular Concern (CPC) in terms of the International Religious Freedom Act, 1998 (IRFA);

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the disabilities which a CPC under the IRFA is subjected to;

(d) whether the proposed step is likely to affect adversely Indo-US relation; and

(e) if so, the measures proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) No. India has not been put on any watchlist or designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" in terms of the International Religious Freedom Act, 1998.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) A country designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" can be subjected to a wide range of diplomatic and economic sanctions.

(d) and (e) Do not arise.